

## The Shunemite Woman

### 1. Introduction:

The story of the Shunemite woman is found in the Bible in the book of 2 Kings 4 & 8

The backdrop of the story:

- In the time of Elisha.
- Elisha's servant was Gehazi.
- The woman remains nameless in the Bible, and the only reference to her was the town she stayed in.
- The Shunammites were Israelites of the tribe of Issachar.
- Shunem was a town about 32 km from Mount Carmel where Elisha stayed.

Function of the Old Testament prophets:

- They were called by God.
- Their main task was to speak the word of God touching on aspects of family, faith, worship, social and political issues
- Words of judgement were spoken in an effort to bring people to repentance.
- God's long term plan was made known by them.

### 2. Passage

Bible Translation: Contemporary English version.

#### **2 Kings 4 : 8 – 37**

- 8 Once, while Elisha was in the town of Shunem, he met a rich woman who invited him to her home for dinner. After that, whenever he was in Shunem, he would have a meal there with her and her husband.
- 9 Some time later the woman said to her husband, "I'm sure the man who comes here so often is a prophet of God.
- 10 Why don't we build him a small room on the flat roof of our house? We can put a bed, a table and chair, and an oil lamp in it. Then whenever he comes, he can stay with us."
- 11 The next time Elisha was in Shunem, he stopped at their house and went up to his room to rest.
- 12 He said to his servant Gehazi, "This woman has been very helpful. Have her come up here to the roof for a moment." She came, and Elisha told Gehazi to say to her, "You've gone to a lot of trouble for us, and we want to help you. Is there something we can request the king or army commander to do?" The woman answered, "With my relatives nearby, I have everything I need."
- 14 "Then what can we do for her?" Elisha asked Gehazi. Gehazi replied, "I do know that her husband is old, and that she doesn't have a son."
- 15 "Ask her to come here again," Elisha told his servant. He called for her, and she came and stood in the doorway of Elisha's room.
- 16 Elisha said to her, "Next year at this time, you'll be holding your own baby son in your arms." "You're a man of God," the woman replied. "Please don't lie to me."
- 17 But a few months later, the woman got pregnant. She gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had promised.
- 18 One day while the boy was still young, he was out in the fields with his father, where the workers were harvesting the crops.
- 19 Suddenly he shouted, "My head hurts. It hurts a lot!" "Carry him back to his mother," the father said to his servant.
- 20 The servant picked up the boy and carried him to his mother. The boy lay on her lap all morning, and by noon he was dead.

# In Tune

word - worship - lifestyle

- 21 She carried him upstairs to Elisha's room and laid him across the bed. Then she walked out and shut the door behind her.
- 4:22 The woman called to her husband, "I need to see the prophet. Let me use one of the donkeys. Send a servant along with me, and let me leave now, so I can get back quickly."
- 23 "Why do you need to see him today?" her husband asked. "It's not the Sabbath or time for the New Moon Festival." "That's all right," she answered.
- 24 She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Let's go. And don't slow down unless I tell you to."
- 25 She left at once for Mount Carmel to talk with Elisha. When Elisha saw her coming, he said, "Gehazi, look! It's the woman from Shunem.
- 26 Run and meet her. And ask her if everything is all right with her and her family." "Everything is fine," she answered Gehazi.
- 27 But as soon as she got to the top of the mountain, she went over and grabbed Elisha by the feet. Gehazi started toward her to push her away, when Elisha said, "Leave her alone! Don't you see how sad she is? But the LORD hasn't told me why."
- 28 The woman said, "Sir, I begged you not to get my hopes up, and I didn't even ask you for a son."
- 29 "Gehazi, get ready and go to her house," Elisha said. "Take along my walking stick, and when you get there, lay it on the boy's face. Don't stop to talk to anyone, even if they try to talk to you."
- 30 But the boy's mother said to Elisha, "I swear by the living LORD and by your own life that I won't leave without you." So Elisha got up and went with them.
- 31 Gehazi ran on ahead and laid Elisha's walking stick on the boy's face, but the boy didn't move or make a sound. Gehazi ran back to Elisha and said, "The boy didn't wake up."
- 32 Elisha arrived at the woman's house and went straight to his room, where he saw the boy's body on his bed.
- 33 He walked in, shut the door, and prayed to the LORD.
- 34 Then he got on the bed and stretched out over the dead body, with his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hand on his hands. As he lay there, the boy's body became warm.
- 35 Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room, then he went back and leaned over the boy's body. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.
- 36 Elisha called out to Gehazi, "Have the boy's mother come here." Gehazi did, and when she was at the door, Elisha said, "You can take your son."
- 37 She came in and bowed down at Elisha's feet. Then she picked up her son and left.

## 2 Kings 8 : 1-6

- 1 Elisha told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, "The LORD has warned that there will be no food here for seven years. Take your family and go live somewhere else for a while."
- 2 The woman did exactly what Elisha had said and went to live in Philistine territory. She and her family lived there seven years.
- 3 Then she returned to Israel and immediately begged the king to give back her house and property.
- 4 Meanwhile, the king was asking Gehazi the servant of Elisha about the amazing things Elisha had been doing.
- 5 While Gehazi was telling him that Elisha had brought a dead boy back to life, the woman and her son arrived. "Here's the boy, Your Majesty," Gehazi said. "And this is his mother."
- 6 The king asked the woman to tell her story, and she told him everything that had happened. He then said to one of his officials, "I want you to make sure that this woman gets back everything that belonged to her, including the money her crops have made since the day she left Israel."

# In Tune

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## 3. The life of the Shunemite Woman:

- She was rich and influential
- She initially invited Elisha to a meal with her and her husband.
- Later on, every time Elisha passed through the town, he would eat with them.
- Later on they built a room on top of their house so that the prophet could stay over every time he would pass through the town.
- Elisha wanted to do something back in return for this woman, but she indicated that she didn't want anything in return.
- The prophet told her that she would have a son. This came true, but the son died.
- Elisha prayed for the boy who was raised from the dead.
- Elisha warned the woman of a seven year famine in Israel.
- She stayed among the Philistines for the seven years.
- After 7 years she came back to the king to ask back her land.
- She received not only her land, but also the seven year's harvest money.

## 4. Modern day application for our lives

- Firstly, when the woman and her husband made a physical room for the prophet, they actually were making room for the word of God in her life.
  - As New Testament Spirit filled believers, when we attend to spiritual disciplines, spending time with God, praying, reading the Bible, we make room for God in our lives; we are creating and setting up a spiritual space where we can communicate with God.
- Secondly, this room made it possible for her to develop a relationship with Elisha.
  - When we make room for the word of God in our lives, it would inevitably lead to a relationship with Him, to speak to God, to praise Him for his goodness, give Him thanks, also making petitions before Him for our needs.
- Thirdly, the son that was given to her was because of a word that the prophet spoke to her. Although the son died, he was raised from the dead by Elisha
  - Sometimes we receive a word from the Lord, and we find ourselves in situations that don't look good.
  - Your circumstances **at the moment** may not seem to be positive, you might face a lot of challenges, but in the end God is faithful to accomplish His word. Be encouraged!
- Fourthly, this woman experienced the death of a loved one and she had to move from her land because of famine. But through both circumstances, she was restored.
  - God sets us up for success. In the end, His plans for us are to prosper us and not to harm us, according to Jer 29:11.
  - Even in death lies victory for us, because as Paul has stated that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21).

# In Tune

word - worship - lifestyle

- Fifthly, this woman was warned of a coming famine.
  - God wants to warn us of coming danger. He wants to help us position ourselves for the future, and sometimes it might not make sense.
  - He knows the future, and what would be the best for us.
- Lastly, this woman was restored in a split second. She was not even on the king's mind when she entered into his presence.
  - God wants to restore us. He will do it in His time, and when the time comes, God usually does it swiftly, without hesitation.
  - This woman's split second restoration had a history.
  - Split second restorations usually have a history of making room for the word of God and acting on it upon hearing, of sacrifices, of Godly decisions, of Godly disciplines.
  - The deeper the valley, the higher the mountaintop

## 5. Conclusion

- How does your and my spiritual space look like?
- In creating these spiritual spaces, God sets us up for success in our lives. He knows the future.
- God calls us to Himself, to intimacy; He wants to meet with us.